

# The Daily News Journal

SPORTS, 1B



TOM BECKWITH/DNJ FILE

A rescued kestrel, a type of falcon, is released back into the wild Friday.

## 3 FREE BIRDS

Young kestrel falcons rescued, treated, fed, released back into the outdoors

**NANCY DE GENNARO** DEGENNARO@DNJ.COM

**MURFREESBORO** — A trio of rescued American kestrels became free birds Friday when Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center released them back into the wild.

After being taken to the nonprofit rescue center, the fledgling falcons spent the past few weeks recovering from malnutrition and dehydration.

"The first one I got in was found outside the judicial building on the sidewalk. One of the deputy dispatchers contacted me about taking it and one of my volunteers drove it down to us," said LouAnn Partington, who runs the Ziggy's Tree avian facility in Tullahoma. "The other sister was found probably about a week or so later, hopping along the gutter in downtown Murfreesboro."

Playing off the judicial theme, the two sibling kestrels were named Judy and Juri. A third one, a male about the same

### Wildlife rescue tips

Every wondered what you should do if you find an injured or sick wild critter like a bunny, bird or squirrel?

Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center has a mammal facility in Lascassas and an aviary in Tullahoma.

"We always tell people to call us if you're not sure if they need to be rescued. I'd rather spend 10 or 15 minutes on the phone trying to figure out what's going on and come up with a game plan than spend the next two or three months rehabbing an animal that didn't need to come to me in the first place," said LouAnn Partington, who specializes in wild bird rescue.

With most animals, the first course of action, if they're not injured or sick, is to keep them with the parents or nest, she said.

Don't give food or water, as an incorrect diet can make the animal worse or cause death.

Find an appropriately-sized container if the animal needs to be rescued. Line with towels or a soft shirt.

Try to be quiet and leave the animal alone. Human sound and touch can be stressful to animals. Be sure to keep pets away, too.

For more details or questions about wildlife rescue, visit [ziggystree.org](http://ziggystree.org). For live animal help, call 931-393-4835 for birds or 615-631-2205 for mammals. You can also email [ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com](mailto:ziggystreewildlife@gmail.com).



# Falcons

Continued from Page 1A

age as the sisters, was brought in from a neighboring county and they named him Judge.

Typically the first thing the rescue does is try to return the birds to the nest. But these kestrel falcons had been away from the nest too long and needed some assistance to get better.

Partington said the two birds found within blocks of each other in downtown Murfreesboro were probably siblings because they were “about the same age.”

“I think in that close a proximity, there wouldn’t be two kestrel nests that close together,” Partington said, explaining that too many nests in a small area would compete for food.

The three kestrels found weren’t injured.

“They were already old enough to pick up food on their own. So all I had to do was the fun part — cutting the mice up in little pieces — and putting it in there with them. I kept them long enough to get them chubbied up and stable,” Partington joked.

Then Partington sent the birds to a partner fa-

cility, Happinest Wildlife Rescue in Chattanooga, where founder Alix Parks has a 30-foot cage where the birds can build some strength in their wings before being released back into the wild.

“Before we released them we actually live hunt them on crickets. Because we figure if they can catch a cricket, then they can catch just about anything else they need to eat,” Partington said.

Mud Bug Farm owner Candy Swan opened up her Murfreesboro property to the rescue group. Swan, a former park ranger and raptor specialist, already has her property cleared from trees so there are long, open flight paths where the birds can swoop in and catch dinner.

“This is perfect kestrel habitat,” said Swan, who released one of the birds.

Leah McDaniel, who found one of the birds on the sidewalk, was able to participate in the release, too.

“I was just driving ... and I just saw it on the sidewalk and I was very persistent and caught it. I had it for a couple of days and fed it chicken livers,” McDaniel said.

But it soon became apparent the bird needed more help. So she contacted Ziggy’s Tree. McDaniel



TOM BECKWITH/DNJ FILE

Local residents work with Ziggy’s Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to release three kestrels, a type of falcon.

was able to see the rescue come full circle when she let the bird go again.

“It was very awesome. I’m glad I was able to be here,” McDaniel said.

While nursing the

birds back to health is important, being able to release them back to Mother Nature is the ultimate goal.

“One of the best parts of the releases is when

you see them realize they don’t have walls,” Partington said. “A lot of these guys, they really can’t fly at the speed they need to, even in our big flight cages. You can al-

most see when it dawns on them, ‘I can keep going.’”

Reach reporter Nancy De Gennaro at 615-631-6630 and follow her on Twitter @DNJMama